

Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team (NSOIT)
Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2011
8:00am – 11:00am

Attending: Bridget Moran, Shawn Cantrell, David Whipple, Kevin Godbout and Bettina von Hagen

Others Present: Cindy Mitchell, Paula Swedeen, Bob Meier, and Bill Robinson

Staff: Andy Hayes, Lauren Burnes

Technical Team Discussion

- Short discussion on the proposed final list of biologists
 - **Bridget:** Tech Team membership, try to get Andy Carey for Conservation
 - Paula offered to talk to Andy Carey; if he was unavailable, we will invite Kara Whittaker
 - No comments/edits were offered to the proposed list of biologists. Final list: Brendan White, USFWS; Bill Gaines, USFS; Joe Buchanan, WDFW; Tim Cullinan, Point No Point Treaty Council; Tony Melchior, Weyerhaeuser; and Andy Carey.
- Regarding the environmental economists and their expertise
 - Should we pick one trained in ecological economics, and another with natural resources economics? General consensus was yes.
 - NSOIT please send top two economist recommendations to Bridget
- Regarding next steps and the timing of economist participation relative to the biologists
 - **Kevin:** The economists will help us understand how to develop and sell the product. Who will want to participate in the marketplace?
 - **Dave:** When do we need the economists relative to the biological discussion? Bettina suggests that we need to have them all along the entire time.
 - **Bettina:** Could do it either way. If you were trying to construct an ecosystem services banking system...could have initial conversation with bios regarding ecosystem services then bring back economists.
 - **David:** We could start off with everyone, see what tech team has to say regarding where/when they should participate

Brian Woodbridge (BW) Recovery Plan Presentation:

- Conservation Reserve Modeling with Species Recovery (PowerPoint)
 - Objective of the model is to develop a framework to ID and prioritize areas for habitat conservation for NSO
 - The models have a broad range of applicability, there are three modeling platforms:
 - 1) Spotted Owl Habitat Suitability Map – contains known landscape data
 - **Kevin:** What was the process to get to the definition of habitat?
 - **BW:** no one has done this other than basic parameters, data sets from industry, FS, academia, any opportunity to extract data; scale of analysis = 500 acre circle
 - **Cindy:** Does the model just look at habitat?

- **BW:** No- we're looking at all of the info that drives where a species lives (such as climate)
- 2) Habitat Reserve Designs – landowners have identified what they think is the best data. It's not a map of stands- it looks at the likelihood of supporting owls based on more than stand structure (for instance, in some parts of range, owls are found in lower 1/3 of north-facing slopes). This is more of a "fuzzy" dataset.
- 3) Population Response (simulation model). We're trying to capture the most habitat value in the smallest area. How does habitat develop over time and what is the population response? It's a spatially explicit, individual-based model. This does not grow habitat over time, it just shows what is likely to happen with owl pops over time given a static habitat scenario (whether that be current, or some desired future state)
- **Bridget:** Could we take out the timber & habitat from the model and search for areas with the right topography/etc.?
 - **BW:** model can help with strategic biological gain for cost, can provide us with critical habitat info
- **Cindy:** Are we looking at growth of habitat?
 - **BW:** All we have is habitat suitability layer, relying on 1996&2006 habitat suitability maps, but not hard to add forest growth modeling.
- **Kevin:** Are you able to assess connectivity with or without barred owls or connections?
 - **BW:** In order to come up with habitat based plan, we had to come up with assumptions regarding the barred owl...critical habitat is essential to recovery, but not enough.
- **Cindy:** Is there an assumption that barred owl and spotted owl can coexist in northern part of their range?
 - **BW:** They're coexisting in California.
 - **Paula:** Good to remember that there are lots of data gaps re spotted owl and barred owl interactions. The map data will show us where to focus incentives.
- **David:** Because data sets and modeling uses 1996 & 2006 NSO data, could we use a model where there were very few pairs found? (Or none?)
 - **BW:** Can overlay all of the data that went into the model
 - **Paula:** For an area that didn't have a lot of owls, may want to put in more of the local knowledge.
- **Kevin:** We could come up with some different scenarios (policy/funding scenarios) to be analyzed by Brian's team related to ownership, connectivity, SOSEA prioritization, etc?
 - **BW:** There is a bit of a resource gap for doing the analytical work for identifying priority lands. Building our *what-if* GIS layers can be quite labor intensive. You would need to figure out what you want to answer and how detailed. For WA, it should be faster. My team will have more capacity after the critical habitat work is complete.
- **Bob Meier:** when will runs be available for WA?
 - **BW:** First run available in October

- **Shawn:** What data/runs are accessible or available to us right now? If we want to do runs for WA right now, what is available?
 - **BW:** Zonation maps available on FWS website now- would be a good starting point. We are currently working on runs for critical habitat this fall, then my team would have more capacity to look at your questions. The HexSim model (population response) is really set up to be run by Brian's team, but the other two are set up to be used by others.
- **Shawn:** Do we need to develop questions?
 - **Kevin:** Get tech team together, plan scenarios with input from NSOIT?
 - **Paula:** I see these maps as opportunities for identifying land for incentives; to devise new economic streams.
- **Kevin:** We have to decide the scenarios and we have to build the data sets.
- **Bill:** Higher probability to be used by the owls, is that possible to look at?
 - **BW:** Yes
- Team agreed to discuss questions more with technical team and get back to BW later this fall to discuss his staff's involvement with answering key analytical questions

Eastside Pilot Update

- **Paula:** Trying to figure out prescriptions to improve low quality habitat, thinning in circles at or below 40% with the objective of improvement of habitat not removal. Need to find funding to pay for planning, field work, and implementation. ID team would consist of DNR, FWS, DFW, Conservation, Industry, Tribe groups
- **Bridget:** Dollar figures?
- **Paula:** That's a next step. Lauren is looking into grants and Chris is looking into a cost estimate.

Bob Meier Update

- **Bob:** Met with Bill Robinson and Lauren to discuss possibility of changing RCO Manual 3 appraisal standards to ROSP appraisal standards.
- **Bill:** Good idea, but challenging for RCO to do that by rule, it's going to take firm public policy (work with the legislature).
- **Bridget:** May take time to work on technical details/feasibility, we can talk about this next time.

Next Steps

- **Bridget:** Meet in the next 4-6 weeks